

ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC EDUCATION SOCIETY

6450 Cecil Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63105

October 4, 1984

Mr. Paul Needham
Pierpont Morgan Library
29 East 36th Street
New York, NY 10016

Dear Mr. Needham:

My friend, Dick Doty of the American Numismatic Society, sent me your 1982 article published in the Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America. I read it with great interest. I congratulate you on assembling such fascinating detail to reach your clear conclusions.

How the two line slugs were produced, you state you are leaving for others to determine (page 430). The question which immediately came to my mind is whether these two line slugs are composed of single letter units held in a form, or whether stereotype has been made from each two line grouping. It would seem to me that Plantin Printing Museum in Antwerp would know whether this kind of stereotyping was known using a sand negative and pouring lead into that impression or some similar method to casting individual type.

In any event, I thought you might be interested in an article I wrote many years ago on Nature Printing and enclose a copy of it.

I would be very interested to learn if others have suggested, or you now know how the two line slugs were prepared.

Sincerely yours,

Eric P. Newman

jah
Encl.
cc: Mr. Richard Doty

ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC EDUCATION SOCIETY

6450 Cecil Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63105

Dr. Paul Needham
Scheide Librarian, Firestone Library
Princeton University
Princeton, NJ 08544

October 29, 2001

Dear Dr. Needham:

At the meeting of the American Historical Printing Association in St. Louis I gave a talk on printing 18th century American Colonial paper money and asked the audience for help as to how some Pennsylvania bills were printed in two colors. A couple of your friends said you liked printing problems and urged me to write to you.

Two color printing in red and black was often used on that paper money with small separate portions of the set type, ornaments and borders in red and the balance in black. These portions were cut out or separated from the main body of type, borders and ornaments. In the October 1, 1773 Pennsylvania issue however the central portion of the set type has a denominational design printed in red on portions of several lines and portions of individual letters. The balance of those individual letters is printed in black ink. The register is astonishingly consistent on the issue, many thousands being printed in perfect register.

I enclose an original of each of four denominations being 10 shillings (# 9799) 15 shillings (# 12180) 20 shillings (# 19217) and 50 shillings (#3833), which respectively have the denomination more or less in Roman numerals in red (X, XV in ligature, 1 for 1 pound of 20 shillings, and L). I do not understand how this printing was accomplished so as to have parts of letters line up so closely and with no smearing, no overlap and perfect register. Stenciling or lifting a portion out seems impossible and inking had to be done rapidly for such a long run. Drying also required time between pressings. The same is true as to part of the top face borders in red.

If you feel inclined could you enlighten me on how this was done. I would be very grateful. If you have any questions you may use Email: [REDACTED]
Fax 314-721- [REDACTED]

When you have finished with the enclosed four notes you may return them by ordinary mail.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Eric P. Newman

ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC EDUCATION SOCIETY

6450 Cecil Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63105

Dr. Paul Needham
Scheide Librarian
Firestone Library
Princeton University
Princeton, NJ 08544

January 28, 2002

Dear Dr. Needham:

On October 29, 2001 we sent you a letter requesting an opinion on the method of printing four Pennsylvania paper money bills. We have not heard from you and are just following up to ask if you need more time or prefer not to get into it. There is no rush on our part for returning the bills but we would appreciate an acknowledgement that you received the four notes.

I will appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric P. Newman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Eric" and "P." being more stylized and "Newman" being more clearly legible.

Eric P. Newman

Subj: Colonial paper currency
Date: 02/08/2002 12:08:38 PM Central Standard Time
From: [REDACTED] (Paul Needham)
To: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr Newman,
Thanks for your reminder re this. I've been absolutely buried in obligations
the last months, and this got shunted to one side.

I'm just now putting the 4 currency notes into the mail to you. But it seems
faster to send a quick response by e-mail. I don't, of course, really know
anything about how these notes were printed red-black with such close
register, so my opinion is purely tentative, though I do believe that in
principle it is testable:

My immediate opinion is that these notes were printed in a single pull, i.e.
without re-registration between black formes and red formes; and that the
red ink was done by a process similar to but not quite identical with
stencilling. The way I see it, the red ink was applied to the end of a
large, shaped "punch" which was placed over the type-surface and held down
firmly. The black ink was then applied all around it — which would require
a dabber that was not a conventional large clumsy ink ball, but rather
something with a straight edge, enabling the black ink to be applied right
up to be vertical sides of that red-inking punch. Then the punch was
removed, and the two-color forme was printed.

The relevant evidence I see is:

(1) 50-shilling note, 1 Oct. 1773: the shape of the red printing on the note
looks to me like a large initial L, including a serif at the right end of
its foot.

(2) 10-shilling note, same date: the shape looks rather like a Y. In
particular, in line 2, the red printing includes two "slashes" to left and
right of the black "of": \ of /. I can't understand what those slashes are
doing there, unless they're the edges of this hypothesized punch.

I think that comes to the limit of what I think & why! And I don't know if
this explanation has already been offered by someone in the literature on
currency printing.

Good luck and All best,
Paul Needham

----- Headers -----

Return-Path: [REDACTED]

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8.112.129.120]) by rly-xg02.mx.aol.com (v83.35)
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Subj: RE: Colonial paper currency
Date: 02/08/2002 1:09:09 PM Central Standard Time
From: [REDACTED] (Paul Needham)
To: [REDACTED]

Thank you -- I'm glad that our ideas seem to fit together -- Paul N.

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED] (Eric P. Newman) [mailto:eric@ericnumis.com]
Sent: Friday, February 08, 2002 1:59 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Colonial paper currency

Dear Mr. Needham: Thank you very much for your opinion on the method of printing the extremely close red and black printing on the 1773 Pennsylvania bills. Yours was somewhat similar to my theory. The punches you use to describe the inking I believe were pads or boxed dabbers mounted on a hinged frame which lifted out of the way for the printing after the black ink was applied. In that manner the placement of the red ink pad or pads would not require time and effort to reposition. As to what you describe as slashes of red these are anti-counterfeiting denominational insignia. The L you noticed was on the 50 shillings and what you thought was a Y slash was really an X on the 10 shillings. The people were reasonably aware of Latin numerals but money was something they quickly learned to read regardless of illiteracy and that is true today. You have added much to my investigation as your friends said you would. I am very appreciative. Thank you again. Eric P. Newman

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Sub: Colonial paper currency
Date: 02/19/2002 8:55:57 AM Central Standard Time
From: [REDACTED] (Needham)
To: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Newman,

Just a brief, and belated, follow-up of thanks for your further information (8 Feb.) on the printing process: what printers called "work and turn". Now, I'm starting to wonder a little more about the simultaneous 2-color inking. I'm not at all sure whether I'm visualizing this properly, but: suppose there was a single inking pad, or stencil, for the "front" side of the forme that was printed black and red? — this pad, perhaps papier mache as you suggest, would have cut-outs for all the red-ink portions. It would be inked entirely in black, and then pressed over the printing surface. While held firmly in place there, the red ink would be pressed into the "holes" of the stencil, maybe using blocks for the rectangular openings.

It seems to me that what I'd suggested before, with hinged pads for the red-ink portion attached to a larger inking frame, is too complicated. My suggestion now is a little bit the reverse of what you suggest, i.e. having the black ink applied directly, by hand, around red-ink pads. It seems to me that because the greater part of the printing surface is black ink, it would be more efficient and more natural to the printer to ink it "mechanically", with the red ink being the finer detail work.

Very tentatively, I see this as a two-step process in the bed of the press itself. First the black-inked "stencil" is laid over the type forme, run under the press, and pressed lightly by the platen to push in the ink. Then it is run out again, and the red ink is applied through the stencil openings. Then the stencil is removed, and a damp sheet laid over the forme, and printed.

Of course, you're the one who would best know whether, in any surviving 2-color notes, we find any accidents of inking that might seem to shed light on how this was done — here, as always in printing, it will be the accidents that give the best information. On the one question you bring up, whether black ink might overlap red ink, or vice versa, I'm not sure that this would be definitive. Depending on the heaviness of the inking, "ink squeeze" might push some black ink over red portions, or the other way around. I tend to think that this test would be a good diagnostic (as it is in incunables, very definitely) when the red inked and black inked portions are printed in two separate press operations.

Well, it is an interesting problem; too bad we don't have Benj. Franklin around to give us the answer. I realize, by the way, that of course I know your standard book, Early Paper Money — but have only glanced at it, because I was never actually studying paper currency. I remember now where it sat on the bookshelves at Sotheby's when I was there. In fact, Princeton has your 4th ed.; I just checked, and it's signed out to a reader -- so you'll be glad to know it's being put to use here. Your 1990 ed. is apparently here in the stacks also, and I'll sign it out when I go out for coffee a little later this morning.

Good luck with all your thinking on this; I agree that it is a fascinating question.

All best wishes,
Paul N.

Paul Needham
Scheide Library
Princeton University Library
1 Washington Road
Princeton NJ 08544

[REDACTED]
Fax: 609-258-2324

Headers

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